

GWYDIR SHIRE COUNCIL

BACKGROUND REPORT

Deliberative Panel and Local Government Services 2015

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1 Introduction

In light of the Fit for the Future Local Government Reform package, Gwydir Shire Council (Council) is committed to engaging the community around the role and future of local government, financial sustainability, service levels, infrastructure provision, and meeting the changing needs of the community. Council engaged the University of Technology Sydney, Centre for Local Government (CLG) to conduct a deliberative panel workshop with a representative group of randomly selected community members, and workshops with Council staff and elected members. The aim of these engagement and facilitation activities is to explore the future of Gwydir local area, service levels and reviewing levels of service, opportunities for shared services and strategic partnerships, asset and financial management, and decisions around budgeting and own source revenue.

Between August and December 2015 a series of consultation meetings will be held to outline the changes proposed in the 'second' LTP (includes the SRV) to ensure community acceptance of the proposed changes to the Council's rating structure and its various service delivery programs. Given the enthusiastic support for the Council standing alone at the various community meetings the Council is confident of receiving the community's continuing support for the changes proposed.

(Gwydir Shire Council Fit For the Future submission).

1.1 This report

This report is based on a review of relevant Council documents, and has been written to inform workshops with Council staff and Councillors and a deliberative panel workshop with community members of the Gwydir Local Government Area (LGA).

The following documents and information has been reviewed:

Special Rates Variation

1. Community Plan
2. Delivery Plan
3. Long Term Financial Plan
4. Tcorp Financial Assessment – 'very weak' sustainability rating
5. Community Engagement Section
 - a. Focus Group Meeting Community Consultation – November 2014
 - b. Community Survey 2014
 - c. Letter to all Rate Payers re. Community Survey 2014
 - d. Mayoral Column re. proposed Special Rate Variation
 - e. Advertisement – Message from the Mayor re. Special Rates Variation
 - f. Timeline of community consultation and Special Rates Variation
6. Community Feedback
 - a. Collated Feedback on the Community Survey 2014 (17 responses from community members)
 - b. Key findings from Community Focus Groups
 - c. Response from GM Eastcott to query / concerns raised from community member
 - d. Preliminary Community Survey 2014 results
7. Debt Recovery Policy
8. Minutes from Council Meeting – Council confirmation to apply for IPART SRV
9. Certification – Application for a SRV

10. Minutes from Council Meeting – Council to adopt 2015/2016 IP&R documentation as IPART requirement
11. Other attachments
 - a. Community Engagement Strategy
 - b. Minutes from Council Meeting (Dec 12 2013)- Summary recommendation for application of IPART SRV
 - c. Minutes from Council Meeting (Dec 18 2014) – Outlines the process and timelessness that needs to be followed to meet the requirements of IPART for SRV application
 - d. Minutes from Council Meeting (Feb 27 2014) – Council held a round a communication consultation meetings in Jan 2014 as part of consultation process for SRV application to IPART. The minutes from each meeting are attached.

Fit for the Future

1. Preliminary Service Reviews
 - a. Counter Services
 - b. Creditors
 - c. Financial Management Accounting
 - d. Weeds
2. Petition (signatures) from residents of Gwydir Shire opposing amalgamation
3. Collated letters from Gwydir residents opposing amalgamation
4. Petition (signatures) from residents of Wialda District opposing amalgamation
5. Petition (signatures) from residents of Gravesend opposing amalgamation
6. Letter from Gwydir Mayor Cr. John Coulton to Minister for Local Government, The Hon. Paul Toole re. community support against amalgamation
7. Letter from Wialda Pastoral & Agricultural Society opposing amalgamation
8. Minutes from Council Meeting (25 June 2015) – Gwydir Shire held community consultation meetings from 26 May to 10 June 2015 for the purpose of seeking community feedback regarding the State Governments ‘fit for the future’ proposal to amalgamate Gwydir Shire
9. Service Comparison between Gwydir Shire, Inverell and Moree

Disc. Profiles – Councillors*

1. Cr. Catherine Egan
2. Cr. Geoff Smith
3. Cr. John Coulton
4. Cr. Kerry McDonald
5. Cr. Marilyn Dixon
6. Cr. Stuart Dick
7. Cr. Angela Doering

*None of these file open

Additional Info

1. Presentation from Council – Community Meeting Upper Horton 21 January 2014
2. Information Sheet – SRV Variation Proposal

3. SRV Application– Part B
4. Notice of Document Display IP&R documents

1.2 Context

Gwydir Shire Council is located approximately 160 kilometres north of Tamworth, 85 kilometres north-west of Inverell and 560 kilometres north of Sydney. The Shire is 9,122 square kilometres in size, with a total population of 4,965 at the time of the 2011 Census.

The LGA comprises of a mix of land uses, including agricultural land (irrigated and dry land cropping as well as livestock production). The two primary town centres in the LGA are Warialda and Bingara, which both have hospitals and medical centres, aged care facilities, schools, libraries and other community facilities. Warialda is the centre for the Council's Technical Services functions. Bingara is the centre for the Administrative functions.

The Community has four main goals which are identified in our Community Strategic Plan:

- > A Healthy and Cohesive Community,
- > Building the Business Base
- > An Environmentally Responsible Shire
- > Proactive Regional and Local Leadership

Gwydir Shire Council are moving towards achieving these goals and like many rural areas, the Shire needs to respond to challenges on a number of fronts. Agriculture remains the dominant industry in the Shire yet this industry is subject to significant change – such as the general ageing of the farming population, market changes, and the possible impacts of climate change. Gwydir Shire is also subject to the broader social pressures occurring in rural areas – such as mental health issues, urban drift of young people, and general population decline¹.

Balancing these challenges are the many positive characteristics of the Shire. These include its unique climate, its central geographic location, the relatively small population, picturesque and popular natural features and attractions, and strong community spirit. These are the core elements contributing to the identity of the Shire of Gwydir and its people².

The age distribution of the Shire's population also presents some interesting characteristics and challenges. The Council must provide enhanced services to the beginning and end of the life cycle. One challenge presented as a result of the Shire's age profile is a growing skill shortage, which is closely correlated to the age profile of our community. This requires a strategy that addresses the retention of our young people, the inward migration of more people and the development of the people that are here. Council is addressing this challenge through the continued development of the Gwydir Learning Region³.

1.3 Organisational structure

We understand Council has the following Core Services Departments:

- > Environmental Services
- > Planning and Building
- > Social & Disability Services
- > Finance Department

¹ Gwydir Shire Council Fit For the Future Submission, 2015

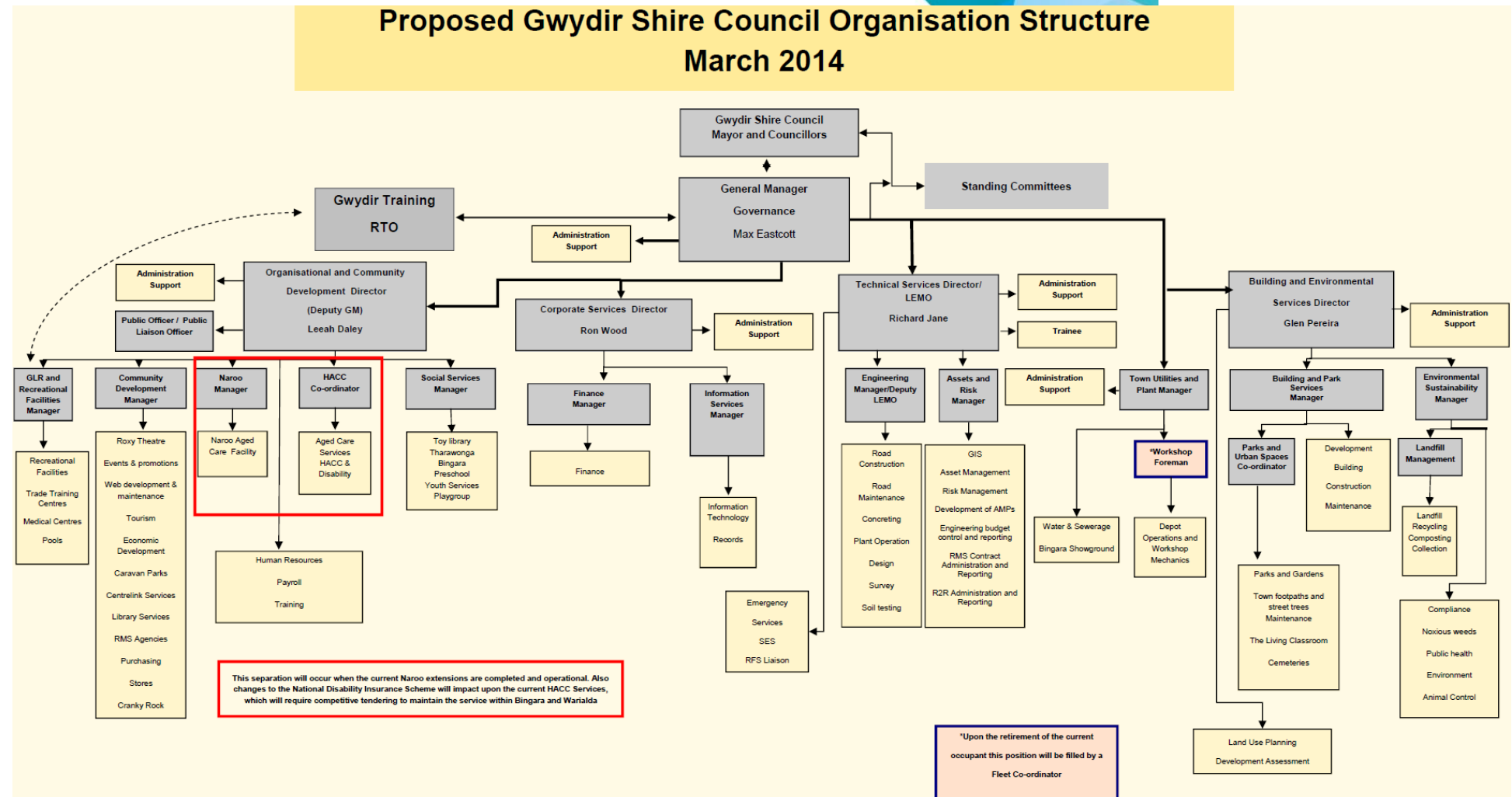
² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

- > Tourism and Development
- > Technical Services.

Figure 1 outlines Councils current organisational structure.

FIGURE 1. GWYDIR SHIRE COUNCIL ORGANISATIONAL CHART, 2014



1.4 Current Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework

Gwydir Shire Council's Integrated Planning & Reporting (IP&R) Suite of Documents is divided into four separate interdependent documents and is a reporting requirement under section 402 of the *Local Government Act 1993*. These documents provide information on Council's direction, what actions will be taken and mechanisms for measuring outcomes.

The first of these documents is the Community Strategic Plan. The Plan provides information on goals for the Community, including the organisation's Mission and the Purpose.

The second is the Resourcing Strategy, a fundamental requirement of the Integrated Planning and Reporting legislation. The Resourcing Strategy contains 3 components:

- > An asset management plan, including a policy, a strategy for at least (10) years and plans for all asset classes under Council's control
- > A long term financial plan, projecting Council's financial position for at least 10 years
- > A phased workforce plan, outlining Council's strategies and actions for developing and maintaining a workforce to underpin the delivery of four year objectives outlined in the Delivery Program.

The Delivery plan is a four year plan outlining the strategies Council will use to achieve the goals set out in the Community Strategic Plan.

Council's Operational Plan defines activities undertaken by Council and the officers responsible. The document includes information on Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and measurable expected outcomes. The KPIs and activities contained in the Operational Plan are to fulfil the Operational Objectives that support the Term Achievements and therefore assist in making progress towards the Destinations contained in the Strategic Plan.

Council commenced developing the Community Strategic Plan in 2014 with an internal audit of current service levels. Council's Community Engagement Strategy was reviewed by Council in readiness for community consultation where particular emphasis was made to engage hard to reach communities and demographic profiles. Council then held a round of Focus Groups aimed at covering the various demographic profiles in our shire. The themes for the Focus Groups included:

- > Special Rate Variation
- > Fees and Charges
- > Service delivery.

In addition to the Focus Groups, Council developed a community survey which was distributed to 2,200 households in the shire and made available via Council's webpage and Facebook page. A letter outlining Council's proposed rate variation was also distributed to all ratepayers seeking feedback.

2 Where Council has come from

We understand Gwydir Shire is one of the newer local government areas in the State. It was proclaimed in March 2004 as a result of the voluntary merger of Bingara and Yallaroi Shires, together with a northern part of Barraba Shire.

2.1 Department of Local Government Promotion Better Practice Program Review Report (2008)

Gwydir Shire Council was asked to complete a strategic management assessment and a comprehensive set of checklists about key Council practices in 2008. The review team examined these and a range of other source documents prior to visiting Council, in order to gain a preliminary understanding of the pressures on Council and how the Council has sought to manage that environment.

Voluntary amalgamation

The creation of the new Council had many challenges. During the transitional period, a number of community meetings were held in towns and villages throughout the Shire. These played a positive role in bringing the Council and residents together and provided a foundation to work from⁴.

In 2008, Council had made significant progress toward integrating the former structures into a single effective administration that can respond to meeting diverse and changing community needs. The review team strongly recommended Council pursue an ongoing strategy to consolidate and build upon the integration of Council's operations and the communities it serves. The strategy should involve the regular review of the ongoing viability and efficiency of maintaining two administrative centres, and two council chambers.

Several recommendations came out of the Review, of particular relevance to this project are:

- > Council should identify opportunities to share resources with other councils to gain better efficiencies in operation
- > Council should develop an ongoing strategy to review of the ongoing viability and effectiveness of maintaining two administrative centres, and two council chambers
- > Council is encouraged to develop 10 year financial plan to support the implementation of its Corporate Sustainability Strategy and Plan 2007
- > Council should undertake a systematic assessment of the condition of all its infrastructure assets
- > Council should develop a register that details the valuation and most recent condition assessment for each asset
- > The updated information on its assets should be used by Council to prepare and implement a long-term asset management plan and infrastructure maintenance programme
- > Council should develop a succession plan for key areas of its operation, which includes addressing gaps left in Council's workforce potentially left by the significant number of employees who will be retiring over the next 10 years.

⁴ Department of Local Government Promotion Better Practice Program Review Report (2008)

3 Contextual challenges

3.1 Current organisational sustainability

Over a number of years there have been various reports focusing on sustainability of local government. This has culminated in a review commissioned for the NSW Treasury Corporation to provide a financial sustainability rating for each NSW local government council. Gwydir Shire Council received a Very Weak rating.

Council has stated that this rating needs to be tempered somewhat by the realisation that it was based on Councils first attempt at the Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) suite of documents, which included the first Long Term Financial Plan.

3.2 Financial sustainability

The Long Term Financial Plan provides a detailed discussion and commentary on Councils financial sustainability. Relevant excerpts are provided below.

Most of the commentary provided in this document is limited to General Fund performance, as each of the other funds has the freedom to set charges to provide appropriate outcomes and current projections are acceptable for those funds. The commentary is limited to the 'Business As Usual' and the proposed '2 x 15% Special Rate Variation' scenarios, as the two other scenarios '3 x 10% Special Rate Variation' and '1 x 20% Special Rate Variation' provide outcomes between the two scenarios to be discussed.

The attached Business as Usual scenario, which was prepared on a conservative basis of projected revenues and expenditure to maintain the current levels of service, without speculative sources of revenues for example asset sales. These results show significant shortfalls in General Fund cash and is simply not acceptable and/or sustainable.

It is quite clear however that continuing on as it has in the past is simply not an option. The attached Business as Usual scenario, which was prepared on a conservative basis of projected revenues and expenditure to maintain the current levels of service, without speculative sources of revenues for example asset sales. These results show significant shortfalls in General Fund cash and is simply not acceptable and/or sustainable.

From an LTFP perspective, this means that GSC needs to work towards attaining a balanced budget. This is a significant challenge and involves many complex issues. Certainly funding shortfalls and associated service level shortfalls remain very important issues that need discussion and lobbying – it is just that these need to be removed from proposed budgets, which need to deal with the reality of current funding limitations.

There are several initiatives that the councillors of Gwydir have approved recently to start down the path of improved budget results, including service level reviews, some redundancies and a Special Rate Variation application.

All of GSC's operations should be reviewed to determine whether the ongoing provision of the service has ongoing relevance, the level of service that should be provided (and associated budget allocations) and if appropriate, fees for service are set at the right level.

General Revenues is one of the complex areas subject to much debate by Council. Unlike other funds (Water, Sewer etc.) General Fund has many restrictions placed upon it, for example Rate Pegging, which sets limits on the increase General Rates may be increased each year – this has been in place for many years. Any increase above the Rate Peg limit requires a time consuming and difficult application process that is costly – which may in the end not be approved by the State Government. The number of

significant (double digit) SRV applications by many councils indicates a failure of the rate pegging system.

Further, some other fees are regulated – Council may not charge in excess of the regulated fee, even if costs exceed the associated revenue.

To bring the above into perspective, there are two issues that will briefly be covered to bring these issues into focus.

The first is roads – the single biggest cost centre of GSC and without doubt a subject of focus for the community and Council. Maintaining current levels of service, as well as meeting the requirements of Road to Recovery grant conditions (discussed below) is a contributing factor to the current tough times experience by General Fund operations (GF). The high levels of depreciation in GF are a major impediment in achieving a balanced budget, with road depreciation representing approximately 80% of this amount.

Road depreciation and associated levels of service, while a topical and volatile issue, must be subject to open and honest debate as to how both of these can be set at long term sustainable levels appropriate to current funding limitations.

The Roads to Recovery program is a federally funded initiative meant to enhance local government's capabilities to maintain road infrastructure. Under current arrangements, approximately one third of GSC general revenues must be directed to road maintenance and construction (excluding administration and there are strict definitions of what is included in 'roads') to remain eligible to be in the program. The intent is to ensure councils maintain appropriate levels of road works from its own sources. In terms of equity, this is less than \$1 of grant funds to every \$3 required by GSC. In comparison, many other grants are either given outright (needing no commitment from councils) or often on a \$1 per \$1 basis. It is also important to note that great lengths are gone to in retaining eligibility for this program, which delivers only around 4% of total revenues – this is not to say that it is not a significant sum that should be disregarded – rather that it needs to be kept in perspective.

As mentioned above, trying to maintaining current levels of service (and in this case not just roads) has led to extreme difficulties for GF operations. Without the SRV it will be just about impossible to continue the currently required levels of funding. With the SRV, it may still be very difficult to maintain eligibility, depending on decisions regarding other services.

Council therefore has three options to explore.

1. To continue under the current requirements and to maintain eligibility, major cuts to all other services would be the likely outcome. It is unlikely this in itself would result in financial sustainability.
2. Negotiate a reduced commitment by GSC to maintain eligibility to an amount that is financially sustainable. While this is potentially the best option, there are many obstacles to be overcome and success would be far from certain.
3. Potentially the most difficult decision to make would be to withdraw from this program entirely, which would allow Council full freedom to direct its resources where it feels appropriate. It is unlikely this would result in any shift from Council to fund as much road works as possible but would allow funds to be directed to other areas should the need arise, which would otherwise not be possible. If option 2 is not achievable, then from a financial sustainability perspective, option 3 would be the next option in terms of preference.

4 Fit For the Future

In September, 2014 the NSW State Government announced guidelines with a view to strengthening communities and ensuring all NSW councils are Fit for the Future (FFTF). Highlights of the FFTF package include a new Local Government Act to be phased in from 2016-17 that will focus on integrated planning and reporting; a new role for the NSW Auditor General; a review of the rating system; a review of the regulatory burden on councils; a recognition that flexible structures should be available; legislative provision for Joint Organisations; and Financial Assistance Grants distribution.

Given Council have a relatively low rate base and low population, this means “more work” and “some tough decisions to improve the Shires sustainability need to be made to improve to meet the required reforms over the next few years.”

Given the limited resources of the local community and the Council’s restricted capacity to produce its own source funding, productivity to this community means the ability to strive for continuous innovation, efficient use of resources and ongoing sustainable growth of population whilst striving for better economic and social outcomes⁵.

4.1 Council Improvement Proposal

Gwydir Shire had two options listed under the final report from the Independent Review Panel. The options were to either consider a merger with Moree Plains Shire Council or participate in the Namoi Councils Joint Organisation. Gwydir Shire has chosen the Namoi Joint Organisation model and has become an active participant in the pilot program.

Council submitted a proposal under Council Improvement (Existing Structure) on 25 June 2015. Key points of the proposal are summarised below.

- > The Council has undertaken an in house review of its scale and capacity against the criteria outlined in the Panel’s report and believes that it satisfies these criteria in the context of the expectations of the area that it serves.
- > Eight community meetings were held throughout the Shire to gauge the mood of the residents with regard to the option of a merger with Moree Plains Shire Council. 505 residents attended these meetings and, except for one person, each meeting enthusiastically passed the following resolution:

“THIS MEETING DOES NOT SUPPORT ANY MERGER WITH MOREE PLAINS SHIRE COUNCIL OR ANY OTHER COUNCIL”.

Assumptions underpinning Councils strategy to become/ remain Fit For the Future include:

- > A Special Rate Variation will be supported by the community
- > Community discussions will lead to a mix of services & service level agreements that fit with expected future revenues
- > Significant reductions in depreciation as a result of improved methodologies and data in relation to the current road fair value revaluation process
- > A reduction of depreciation in relation to revised service standards in relation to renewal and maintenance of assets.
- > Fine tuning the ratios will lead to more appropriate and relevant ratios and benchmarks
- > Assets identified as surplus to requirements result in sales.

⁵ Gwydir Shire Council Delivery Program, Adopted 11 February 2015

- > Reductions in employee costs as staff numbers are reduced due to attrition (positions not being filled as staff retire or resign) and potential redundancies due to reductions in service levels.
- > Reduction in operating costs due to reduced service levels.

4.1.1 Key strategies and outcomes

The following Table provides a summary of the key strategies Gwydir Shire Council documented to improve performance against the sustainability benchmarks in the 2016-20 period, including expected outcomes.

TABLE 1. KEY STRATEGIES AND OUTCOMES TO IMPROVE COUNCILS PERFORMANCE

Objective	Strategies	Key milestones	Outcome
Sustainability			
1. Increased revenues	a) Special Rate Variation (SRV)	Fully costed alternative service levels. Community consultation in relation to acceptable mix of service levels to available funding.	Special rate variation submission and acceptance. Reductions in service levels in relation to operational activities and capital renewals is a staged fashion, leading to benchmark compliance.
2. Long term reductions in depreciation	a) Review asset renewal standards. b) Review what is considered a 'satisfactory' mix of asset conditions. c) Rationalisation of assets held. d) Review construction and maintenance methodologies for improvements in cost and effective lives. e) Financial modelling of alternatives	In conjunction with Objective 1 (above), review service levels to determine what the mix of service levels and funding the community considers satisfactory. Identify assets that may be disposed of – subject to restrictions imposed and liquidity of market.	Reduction of depreciation as a result of lower renewal standards, potentially longer lives from assets and disposal of surplus assets. Long term alignment (with appropriate timeframes relative to effective lives of asset classes) of depreciation and renewal works.
3. Industry review and acceptance of ratio methodologies and benchmarks. There is significant debate regarding the ratio calculation methodologies and appropriateness of benchmarks.	Being involved in debates and discussions regarding calculation methodologies and relevance of benchmarks.	Development of appropriate stances and viewpoints on methodologies and benchmarks.	Appropriate and industry supported methodologies and benchmarks.
Infrastructure and service management			
1. Long term alignment of	a) Review asset	Review service levels to determine what the	Reduction of depreciation as a result

depreciation and renewals	<p>renewal standards.</p> <p>b) Review what is considered a 'satisfactory' mix of asset conditions.</p> <p>c) Rationalisation of assets held.</p> <p>d) Review construction and maintenance methodologies for improvements in cost and effective lives.</p>	<p>mix of service levels and funding the community considers satisfactory.</p> <p>Identify assets that may be disposed of – subject to restrictions imposed and liquidity of market.</p>	<p>of lower renewal standards, potentially longer lives from assets and disposal of surplus assets.</p>
2. Increased revenues	<p>a) Special Rate Variation (SRV)</p> <p>b) Improvements in distribution of Financial Assistant Grants methodologies.</p>	<p>Fully costed alternative service levels.</p> <p>Community consultation in relation to acceptable mix of service levels to available funding.</p>	<p>Special rate variation submission and acceptance.</p> <p>Reductions in service levels in relation to operational activities and capital renewals in a staged fashion, leading to benchmark compliance.</p>
3. Reduction in borrowing costs.	<p>Review loan borrowings and consolidate at lower rates where possible.</p>	<p>Being considered 'Fit for the Future' will result in access to lower borrowing costs via Tcorp, otherwise at current market prices.</p>	<p>Reduction in borrowing costs will result in more funds being available for maintenance and/or renewals and potentially increase borrowing capabilities.</p>
4. Industry review and acceptance of ratio methodologies and benchmarks. There is significant debate regarding the ratio calculation methodologies and appropriateness of benchmarks.	<p>Being involved in debates and discussions regarding calculation methodologies and relevance of benchmarks.</p>	<p>Development of appropriate stances and viewpoints on methodologies and benchmarks.</p>	<p>Appropriate and industry supported methodologies and benchmarks.</p>
Efficiency			
1. Service level alignment with community expectations and available funding	<p>In depth service level reviews for all council functions</p>	<p>a) Alternative service levels identified and costed (sustainably)</p> <p>b) Community consultation regarding mix of services, service levels and funding.</p>	<p>Service mix that is fit for purpose and accepted by the community, that is relevant and appropriately (sustainably) funded with proposed revenues.</p>
2. Industry review and acceptance of ratio methodologies and	<p>Being involved in debates and discussions regarding</p>	<p>Development of appropriate stances and viewpoints on</p>	<p>Appropriate and industry supported methodologies and</p>

benchmarks. There is significant debate regarding the ratio calculation methodologies and appropriateness of benchmarks.	calculation methodologies and relevance of benchmarks.	methodologies and benchmarks.	benchmarks.
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4.1.2 Improvement Action Plan

The following Table provides a summary of the key improvement actions that will be achieved in the first year of Gwydir Shire Councils plan to improve performance.

TABLE 2. SUMMARY OF COUNCILS KEY IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS

Actions	Milestones
1. Special Rate Variation application	<p>Further preparation of case – June to February</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community consultation (aided by the use of consultants) Sept – Jan - Submission to IPART in February 2017. - 2 x 15% SRV preliminary target for increase with final application determined in consultation with community.
2. Service level reviews	<p>A full and extensive review of service levels as proposed will take significant time – quite easily extending beyond 1 year.</p> <p>Therefore it is essential to target services that have the most impact on ratio and sustainability results.</p> <p>This process has already commence but will be significantly ‘ramped up’ so that the major contributors are included as part of the discussion with the community about the appropriate mix of services for the funding available.</p> <p>The objectives of the review must relate to sustainable outcomes.</p>
3. Alignment of renewals and/or cash reserves and depreciation	<p>Essentially part of the service level review process, either demonstrate alignment of renewals and depreciation or for asset classes with long effective lives that do not require renewals within the 10 year planning scope (e.g. bridges), the capacity to set aside cash reserves to fund renewals as and when required.</p> <p>We believe this approach should be applied to all asset classes, not just ‘buildings and infrastructure’.</p>
4. Reduction in borrowing costs	<p>Nov-June – renegotiation of current borrowings with a view to restructure and reduce overall interest payments. Depending on FFTF outcomes this may be via Tcorp or via market mechanisms.</p>

4.2 The Economic Impacts of Local Government Amalgamations Report

We understand Council has conducted some economic analyses in light of the Fit For the Future reform package, which was released by the NSW Government in September 2014. Council have presented scenario based research, including economic impact indicators for the 13 Local Government Areas in the Northern Inland region, and have considered arguments against and for proposed amalgamations.

- > Need to reduce service levels without additional revenue injections, and
- > Local government reform pressures.

5 Special Rate Variation

We understand Council submitted an application to the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) on 16 February 2015, for a Special Rate Variation (SRV) of 15% (inclusive of the 2.4% rate pegging allowance) for the 2015/2016 year and a further 15% Special Rate Variation (inclusive of rate pegging) for 2016/2017 year with a cumulative effect of 32.25%.

IPART partially approved this application, with a temporary increase for just 1-year of Gwydir Shire Council's application to permanently increase its general income by 32.25% over the next 2 years. One increase of 15% was allowed, instead of the two consecutive 15% increases the council requested. This amount includes the 2.4% rate peg.

5.1 Drivers

We understand that some of the drivers for the SRV application included:

- > Struggling to maintain service levels along with own source revenue obligations for Road to Recovery (Federal Government road funding initiative with strict compliance rules)
- > General Fund cash reserves run down to a level where significant expenditure cuts were required
- > Difficulties in maintaining existing services and expectations from the community
 - Examples where Gwydir is now providing services that many urban councils do not include aged care, preschool services, medical services. As part of Councils continual efforts to minimise costs, they have recently been successful in transferring responsibility for the day to day operations of medical services to another party.
- > Additional external pressures are also growing to improve Council's sustainability, for example the IP&R and Fit for the Future initiatives of the State Government.

Councils Long Term Financial Plan contains baseline and scenario based data and discussion around the need for the SRV:

Additionally, if nothing is done in relation to funding as shown in Appendix A of the Long Term Financial Plan, service levels will need to be reduced and Council's financial position will continue to deteriorate – the operating result will become worse, General Fund cash will remain in a poor state, equity will continue to reduce. In almost every respect Councils long term sustainability problems become worse.

The Special Rate Variation proposal of 2 x 15% rate rises (appendix B Long Term Financial Plan) will not be the panacea to all problems, but will go a long way to ensure current levels of service (in a broad sense) are within reach. Council continues to review services to ensure there is a high level of correlation to the needs and wants of the community and that we have the right mix.

5.2 Community engagement activities

We understand council conducted engagement activities as part of the SRV application. The methods of engagement employed included shire wide focus groups, a community survey, media release, direct mail, indirect mail via 'To the Householder', Council's website, and an online discussion forum made available via Council's Facebook page.

The IPART determination report considered that the council has not made the community sufficiently aware of the planned impact on rates in 2015-16, and did not provide enough detail to the community around the cumulative nature of the rate rise. The determination also suggests Council did not respond adequately to key community concerns about the SRV.

5.2.1 Key messages to the community

The following provides an excerpt from an information sheet on the SRV proposal:

The Special Rate Variations proposed will form only one part of the puzzle aimed at improving Council's sustainability. There is no magic silver bullet to improve sustainability – it will take considerable efforts across a range of areas to achieve the required outcome.

Other pieces of the puzzle include:

- > Reviewing our service levels – are we providing the right mix of services at a price level that is acceptable for those services?*
- > Potential changes in distribution methodologies in Financial Assistance Grants, shifting more funds to those councils that genuinely need the assistance. Financial Assistance Grants form an important component of funding for this Council and we are hopeful that we may see an increase in funding from this source.*
- > Improving asset management practices, including fine tuning depreciation calculations. Due to the size of our asset base, even small improvements in accuracy can have significant effects on outcomes.*
- > Continuous improvement practices. Reviewing our practices and gaining efficiencies means we can do more with less. Because ours is a large, diverse organisation delivering a very large range of functions, ensuring all our practices are at peak efficiency is a challenge, but one Council takes seriously, by endeavouring practices as best we can.*

The approved rate peg increase by the IPART of 2.3% for the 2014-2015 year will equate to approximately \$127,000 for Gwydir Shire. The Special Rate Variations under consideration are a 5% increase resulting in approximately \$276,000 additional revenue (this includes the 2.3% rate peg increase) and a 7.5% increase which would result in approximately \$414,000 additional revenue (including the 2.3% rate peg increase) each year for two years. This would compound in the second year so there would be some minor additional increase in year two. More accurate estimates are being prepared, including how this will affect various ratepayers, and will be available for community consultation towards the end of January – early February 2014.

In recognition that Council does not want to place an unfair burden on ratepayers, it is anticipated the majority of the increase, at least in year one, can be offset by decreases in some Waste Charges (based on a new waste collection contract providing reduced costs) and potentially maintaining water and sewer charges at their current levels. Please note that the reductions will mostly affect the major urban centres. Accurate details will be provided as they become available.

To put this into perspective, General Fund rates (which is where the increase is being sought) equated to less than 20% of Council's total revenues in the last financial year. Furthermore, the consolidated operating result for Council was a loss of \$5.3m for the same period, or a loss of \$9.5m before capital grants. Each of these is a measure taken into consideration in giving our 'very weak' sustainability rating.

This simply highlights the position stated above, that Council needs to address sustainability on a number of fronts to make any headway.

6 Reviewing levels of service

As part of improving Councils long term financial sustainability, Council has identified the need to adjust services and service levels with the objective being a mix of services at a level that the community is willing to support financially that leads to sustainable outcomes – ie lead to improvements and compliance with sustainability ratios. We understand the service review process has started internally, using service review tools RevuMap. Some of the key focus areas, which will yield significant savings, are:

- > Roads and bridges
- > Finance management
- > Payroll and HR
- > Training
- > Risk
- > Parks and gardens
- > Halls and buildings
- > Cemeteries.

Depending on how you classify them, Gwydir Shire Council potentially has over 80 individual service units. These service units cover an extraordinary range of services covering areas such as social services (preschools to aged care), environmental services (environmental protection, education and weed control), infrastructure services (buildings, roads etc.), regulatory services (building control, food shop inspections etc.), tourism and economic development as well as the services considered more traditional of local government including libraries, water, sewer and waste collection to name a few.

The following Figure 2 provides a snapshot of Councils current service responsibilities:

FIGURE 2: GWYDIR SHIRE COUNCIL SERVICE RESPONSIBILITIES

Service Responsibilities

Administration Centres	2
Budget	
Workforce	165
Community Facilities	
Community Buses	2
Neighbourhood and Community Centres	2
Public Toilets and Amenity Blocks	13
Public Halls	8
Youth Centres	1
Senior Citizens Centres	1
Central & Branch Libraries	2
Theatre	1
Toy Libraries	2
Land Use	
Parks (playgrounds)	10
Sporting Grounds	3
Social Services	
Vacation Care	4
Preschools	1
Mobile Preschool and Playgroup	1
Supported Playgroups	3
Sporting Facilities	
Sporting Fields	4
Swimming Complexes	2
Tennis Courts	2
Roads Infrastructure	
Road Lengths	2320km
Footpath Lengths	18km
Kerb and Gutter Lengths	63km

Council have provided CLG with information around comparative services for Moree Plains Shire Council and Inverell Shire Council.

6.1 Community satisfaction around services

The community survey results for the SRV proposal regarding the Council's services highlighted a high degree of satisfaction across all areas. The only area where the respondents rated the Council's service 'poor' more highly than 'adequate' was the maintenance of unsealed rural roads.

Q 17. Please indicate your opinion on how the Council performs in the following areas of its operations.	Adequate Total Responses	Adequate % of Respondents	Poor Total Response	Poor % of Respondents
Information availability - are you kept informed?	336	63.52%	193	36.48%
Donations and in-kind support to community groups	351	80.50%	85	19.50%
The maintenance of public infrastructure generally	406	79.76%	103	20.24%
The maintenance of unsealed roads	249	46.46%	287	53.54%
The maintenance of urban sealed roads	360	67.54%	173	32.46%
Emergency services - State Emergency Services	413	87.50%	59	12.50%
Emergency Services - Rural Fire Services	376	83.00%	77	17.00%
Aged services - Naroo and Community Care	340	81.93%	75	18.07%
Social and Community Planning	251	65.19%	134	34.81%
Family based services	223	66.37%	113	33.63%
Child and Youth services	205	61.19%	130	38.81%
Community housing	176	52.85%	157	47.15%
Council run Preschools (Bingara and Tharawonga)	224	71.79%	88	28.21%
Bingara Caravan Park	255	68.00%	120	32.00%
Warialda Caravan Park	274	73.85%	97	26.15%
Bingara Cemetery	255	71.03%	104	28.97%
Warialda Cemetery	248	70.86%	102	29.14%
Animal Control	242	53.90%	207	46.10%
Noxious weed control	271	59.43%	185	40.57%
Landfill management	337	72.79%	126	27.21%

Q 17. Please indicate your opinion on how the Council performs in the following areas of its operations.	Adequate Total Responses	Adequate % of Respondents	Poor Total Response	Poor % of Respondents
Domestic waste collection	385	82.80%	80	17.20%
Recycling	391	78.99%	104	21.01%
Recreational areas	394	86.78%	60	13.22%
Town sewerage services	330	82.29%	71	17.71%
Warialda water supply	211	62.80%	125	37.20%
Bingara water supply	210	61.58%	131	38.42%
Gravesend water supply (Note: only 10 of the 142 'poor' rating identified themselves as a Gravesend resident)	86	37.72%	142	62.28%
North Star water supply (Note: only 1 of the 139 'poor' rating identified themselves as a North Star resident and this respondent rated every service 'poor')	71	33.81%	139	66.19%
Bingara swimming pool complex	222	69.81%	96	30.19%
Warialda swimming pool complex	232	70.09%	99	29.91%
Cultural facilities	213	66.56%	107	33.44%
Tourism and events promotion	342	75.66%	110	24.34%
Economic development support	200	59.00%	139	41.00%
Libraries	360	83.14%	73	16.86%

7 What the community have told Council to date

A desktop review has been undertaken to ascertain recent consultation processes implemented by Gwydir Shire directly related to the application of the Council's IPART application for a Special Rates Variation increase. The following table provides an overview of the Gwydir Shire Council's community consultation processes, associated methods and outcomes and sources.

Special Rates Variation Consultation

Engagement strategy	Overview of strategy	Consultation methods and outcomes	Source
Focus groups	<p>Council conducted a series of focus groups held from 17 November – 21 November 2014. The focus groups were focused on understanding the communities needs and views surrounding current Council service levels, future needs and service level and the proposed special rate variation increase. The focus groups also provided participants an opportunity to complete Community Survey 2014 maximising community exposure and result rate. A total of 17 focus groups were conducted by Council.</p>	<p>Focus group recruitment sought a diverse and inclusive representation of the community. The participant list provided by council demonstrated that the following categories were central in the recruitment of participants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Women > Young families > Older people > Business > Indigenous > Disability/Carer > Farming > Youth <p>Key findings from the focus groups indicated that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Young people understood that while the SRV increase wouldn't affect them directly, there are direct implications for their families. Young people disapprove of amalgamation. > Older people understood the need for Council to increase rates. > Women believed that the SRV application and rates increase needed to be thoroughly communicated with the community and while the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > <u>Outcomes from focus groups</u> > <u>Participant list from focus groups</u>

Engagement strategy	Overview of strategy	Consultation methods and outcomes	Source
		increase was understood to be necessary, participants felt that it will be difficult for those affected by the drought to adjust.	
Gwydir Community Survey	<p>Council developed this community survey to provide an understanding of how the community felt in regard to rating options as well as to access the overall attitude of the community towards rate increasing. The survey also sought to develop an understanding of the community's attitude in regards to the future direction of the Shire.</p> <p>Councils issued the survey through the following mechanisms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Direct mail to 3031 rateable assessments > Made the survey available online > Provided the survey to participants of Council focus groups > Sent letters to ratepayers to announce the Community Survey 	<p>A total of 790 respondents completed the survey with 588 returned survey forms and 202 completed internet based forms. Council notes that responses were anonymised making duplicate responses undetectable.</p> <p>The community survey was advertised through the following channels:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Council website > Council facebook page > Newspapers > Radio > Email register <p>Key results highlight</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Little support from respondents on rate increases (55% of respondents did not support any rate increase; 4% supported the proposed increase in the IPART Application submission) > Warialda respondents were not supportive of any rate increase beyond the allowable rate pegging interest (51%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > <u>Community Survey 2014</u> > <u>Preliminary results from Community Survey</u> > <u>Letter to ratepayers</u>

Engagement strategy	Overview of strategy	Consultation methods and outcomes	Source
		<p>with only 2% in favour of the proposed increase of 15% per year</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Bingara residents were not supportive of any rate increase beyond the allowable rate pegging interest (53%) with 7% in favour of the proposed increase of 15% per year > Farmland residents were not supportive of any rate increase (63%) with only 3% in favour of the proposed 15% increase per year > Similar results were found for rural and village residents. 	
Submissions from community in response to Community Survey	<p>Council received several submissions from the community in response the Community Survey. The following responses are included as submissions from the community in response to the Community Survey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Ratepayers were given a 'Hotline' number where queries or comments on the survey could be addressed > Feedback was collected from the Council's online community forum through Council's facebook page > Council addressed any emailed submissions in response to the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > 7 queries/comments were submitted through Council's 'Hotline'. Overall, the comments ranged from general comments about the difficulty of coping with an increased rate, and queries on increased rates for the application and into the future. > Council received 17 instances of mailed/emailed submissions regarding the Community Survey including comments with issues on the survey layout, issues around the proposed increased rates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > <u>Table illustrating 'Hotline' queries or comments (p. 24)</u> > <u>Link to Council Facebook page and table of feedback left on Council Facebook page (p.25)</u> > <u>Collated emailed/direct mailed submissions</u>

Engagement strategy	Overview of strategy	Consultation methods and outcomes	Source
	Community Survey	variation and general comments regarding council services.	
Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R)	<p>Council revised the following IP&R documents (a necessary process for the IPART application)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Community Engagement Strategy > Community Strategic Plan > Delivery Program > Long Term Financial Plan > Workforce Plan > Statement of Revenue Policy <p>The proposed special rates variation was detailed in every revision of the IP&R documentation</p>	<p>The documents were placed on public display and distributed for public comment from 6 January – 2 February.</p> <p>The documents were advertised through various channels and available at a variety of Council locations.</p> <p>Advertising occurred in the following manner:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Newspaper > Council website > Email register <p>The documents were resolved to be adopted with changes adopted during a Council Meeting on 11 February 2015</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > <u>Community Engagement Strategy</u> > <u>Community Strategic Plan</u> > <u>Delivery Program</u> > <u>Long Term Financial Plan</u> > Workforce Plan (not available) > Statement of Revenue Policy (not available) > <u>Resolution to adopt plans</u>
Individual enquiry and response submitted through Council Facebook	Community member contacted Council through Council Facebook with concerns regarding the possible rate increase.	The concerns detailed from the community member focussed around the sustainability of the rate increases as a long term solution to Council's problems. GM Eastcott provided a response to the concerns raised by the community member.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > <u>Response to concerns raised by community member</u>
Rates Advertisement	Council advertised the rates components which would be affected if the proposed	The advertisement was addressed as 'Message from the Mayor', however it is not mentioned where this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > <u>Rates advertisement</u>

Engagement strategy	Overview of strategy	Consultation methods and outcomes	Source
	rate increase was accepted by IPART.	advertisement was placed.	
Mayoral Column	<p>Mayoral Column was published on 21 January 2014 in the following newspapers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Bingara advocate > Warialda standard > Barraba gazette 	The column addressed the special rates variations and provided an overview of the proposed rate variation while communicating the need for to re-evaluate current service levels	> <u>Mayoral Column</u>

Fit for the Future Consultation

Engagement strategy	Overview of Strategy	Consultation methods and outcomes	Source
Community Survey	Please see detailed information above re. community survey	<p>A question in the community was used to understand the community attitude toward the Fit for the Future proposed amalgamation. Respondents were given the choice of several options regarding amalgamation and asked to nominate 1st, 2nd and 3rd preferred choices. The results indicate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > In regards to amalgamation , 58% of respondents favoured to continue to stand along an LGA; 14% preferred to merge with Inverell Shire 	> <u>Preliminary results from Community Survey</u>

		<p>Council</p> <p>> As a second preference, 22% of respondents still favoured the option to 'continue to stand alone as a local government authority'. 19% of respondents chose a merger between Inverell Shire Council and 19% of respondents chose 'develop a shared services agreement with Moree Plains Shire Council' as the preference second option.</p>	
Letters of support from the community in opposition to the proposed amalgamation	Council received 646 signed letters in support of Council's decision to remain independent and opposed to the proposed amalgamations detailed in Fit for the Future.		> <u>Collated letters in support of Gwydir Shire to remain independent and opposed to amalgamation</u>
Letter from Gwydir Mayor Cr Coulton to Adam Marshall MP	Cr Coulton's letter to Adam Marshall MP details the community support in response to Council's decision to remain independent despite the suggestion in Fit for the Future for amalgamation	In the letter, Cr. Coulton describes the signed petitions and the signed letters received from the community in support of council and in opposition to amalgamation.	> <u>Letter from Gwydir Mayor Cr Coulton to Adam Marshall MP</u>
Petition from the residents of Gwydir Shire in opposition to any amalgamation	A petition with 967 signatures was collected from the residents of Gwydir Shire in opposition to any proposed amalgamation	The signed petition details that 'The residents of Gwydir Shire do not support any merger with Moree Plains Shire or any other	> <u>Petition from the residents of Gwydir Shire in opposition to any amalgamation</u>

Council'			
Petition from the residents of Warialda District Chamber Inc. in opposition to amalgamation	A petition with 39 signatures was collected from the residents of Warialda district in opposition to any proposed amalgamation	The signed petition details that 'We , the undersigned, believe that amalgamation of Gwydir Shire Councils with an adjoining Shire is not in the interests of our citizens and ratepayers, and is not the solution to the challenges facing local government.'	> <u>Petition from the residents of Warialda District Chamber Inc. in opposition to amalgamation</u>
Petition from the residents of Gravesend in opposition to amalgamation	A petition with 85 signatures was collected from the residents of Warialda district in opposition to any proposed amalgamation	The signed petition details that 'We , the undersigned, believe that amalgamation of Gwydir Shire Councils with an adjoining Shire is not in the interests of our citizens and ratepayers, and is not the solution to the challenges facing local government.'	> <u>Petition from the residents of Gravesend in opposition to amalgamation</u>
Letter from the Warialda Pastoral and Agricultural Society in support of Gwydir Shire remaining independent	A letter from the Warialda Pastoral and Agricultural Society was writing in support of Gwydir Shire Councils decision to remain independent and in opposition of amalgamation.	The letter details for a forced amalgamation of Gwydir Shire Council would negatively affect and significantly impact on the Society's viability and ability to provide major events for the community (including the Warialda Show).	> <u>Letter from the Warialda Pastoral and Agricultural Society in support of Gwydir Shire remaining independent</u>
Community meetings (consultations) in response to the Fit for the Future suggestion of an amalgamation with Moree	Council held 'a round' of community meetings to communicate the information in the State Government's Fit for the Future report and proposal for Gwydir Shire to amalgamate	There was a total of 7 community meetings held in Council locations between 26 May- 10 June. The community meetings were	> <u>Council minutes (June 2015) summarising the methods and outcome of the community meetings</u>

Plains Shire	with Moree Plains.	<p>advertised in the following manner:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Newspaper - Radio - Council website - Council Facebook page <p>A total of 505 attendees came to the community meetings.</p> <p>The outcome of the meetings was an overall support from the community towards council remaining independent and against amalgamation. The community also supported Council's decision to increase special rates variation by 15% over the coming years for a total of 32% increase.</p> <p>The community found that the State Governments approach was not flexible and unfairly subjected rural councils to adhere to the same benchmarks as City councils</p>
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Amalgamation Consultation 2003

Engagement strategy	Overview of Strategy	Consultation methods and outcomes	Source
Bingara Community Survey 2003	Bingara Shire Council commissioned a consultant to	The sample of the survey was drawn at random from a list of	> <u>Community Survey 2003</u>

Engagement strategy	Overview of Strategy	Consultation methods and outcomes	Source
	<p>conduct a community survey assessing the overall community attitude towards amalgamation issues and to ascertain the community satisfaction with Council services and facilities. The survey was conducted using CATI method of telephone interviewing and had a total of 496 respondents. The survey was conducted from 8-10 August 2003. These dates were on evenings and weekends to ensure a maximum number of respondents were free to answer.</p>	<p>electors provided by Council.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Respondents were presented with various options for amalgamations, and the most favoured choice was a merger between Bingara and Yallaroi. > Almost two-thirds of respondents (65%) placed the Bingara-Yallaroi merger as their first preference. A further 16% presented this merger as their second preference > The second most popular first preference was a merger between Bingara, Yallaroi and Barraba. Although this was the second most popular first preference merger, only 12% of respondents rated this as a first preference. A total of 57% of respondents placed this merger among their top 3 preferences. > The option with the least support was a merger between Bingara, Barraba and Manilla. Only 2% of respondents nominated 	

Engagement strategy	Overview of Strategy	Consultation methods and outcomes	Source
		<p>this option as their first preference and 18% include it in their top three choices.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > One question was placed in the survey that allowed elections ‘an opportunity to have their say about reasons for support or opposition to Council amalgamating’. > Overall, opinion was divided on the issue of amalgamation with 46% in support and 43% in opposition > When examining the strength of opinion 33% ‘support’ the merger with an addition 13% ‘strongly supporting merging. > The key belief behind supporters of amalgamation was that that the amalgamation was ‘inevitable and will happen anyway’ (20%); 13% believe the merger will ‘improve council services and facilities’ and 9% believe a merger ‘will result in Council having more revenue’. 	

Engagement strategy	Overview of Strategy	Consultation methods and outcomes	Source
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > The key beliefs for opposition was the belief from 22% that Council 'does a good job and a better job than other Councils'; 14% believe the merger will result in 'reduced/fewer facilities and service' and 11% believe the merger will 'lose the unique quality/identity of Bingara' 	

8 Next steps

8.1 Staff workshop

- > Purpose of the project
- > Test back findings of the document review including:
 - Key challenges for Council
 - Action Plan for improving performance
- > Service reviews and priorities for service levels
- > Evidence base for the SRV, FFtF and the deliberative panel
- > Experts for panel
- > Discuss the aims and objectives of the upcoming Deliberative Panel including:
 - Why you use a deliberative panel and the different forms it can take
 - The process for selecting panel members that will match the population profile of Gwydir LGA
 - Key questions/ areas for presentation to the panel
 - Key messages/ criterion to be used by the panel
 - What information witnesses/ experts will be delivering to the Panel

8.2 Councillor workshop

- > Purpose of the project
 - Exercises to see what Councillors want to come out of the project
 - IPART – not enough engagement – but also opportunity for more strategic issues
- > Test back findings of the document review including:
 - Key challenges for Council
 - Action Plan for improving performance
- > The future of Gwydir LGA including changing community needs
- > Service reviews and priorities for service levels
- > Best ways to engage with the community around service levels and support for a SRV
- > Discuss the aims and objectives of the upcoming Deliberative Panel including:
 - Why you use a deliberative panel and the different forms it can take
 - The process for selecting panel members that will match the population profile of Gwydir LGA
 - Key questions/ areas for presentation to the panel
 - Key messages/ criterion to be used by the panel
 - What information witnesses/ experts will be delivering to the Panel.

8.3 Deliberative panel workshop

Why use a Deliberative Panel?

Democratic participation requires citizen's to be informed enough to participate meaningfully in shared conversation and deliberation with their peers.

Using a Deliberative Panel provides an opportunity for Gwydir residents and business owners to understand the services provided by Council and to express their support, concerns and ideas. This is a chance for every day citizen's to learn about Council sustainability issues (by hearing from and cross examining experts), to reflect on it together (with the help of a professional facilitator) and to craft a collective statement to announce to the rest of the community.

Objectives of the Panel

The objectives of this panel will be workshopped with Council in earlier stage of the project and will be informed by the document review and discussions with Council, however we envisage the broad purpose of the panel will be to further explore public concern and issues around:

- > The future of Gwydir LGA including changing community needs
- > Service levels and reviewing levels of service
- > Opportunities for shared services, resource sharing and strategic partnerships
- > Asset and financial management and decisions around budgeting and own source revenue.

How participants will be selected

We propose to use an expert social research recruitment company to randomly select and narrow down a group of approximately 30 residents to be part of the Deliberative Panel. The selection of the Panel will be matched to the population profile of the Gwydir LGA, by considering gender, age, rate payers and tenants, and localities. This will ensure the group of citizens will be representative of the wider community. Notes may be included encouraging the participation of harder to reach groups such as young people or people with English as a second language. Participants will be paid incentives for their time.

Preparation, facilitation and reporting of outcomes

One week prior to the Deliberative Panel Workshop, and once the recruitment has been finalised, we propose to draft an invite letter and welcome pack to Panel members which will include:

- > Background information on Deliberative Panels
- > How the Panel will be run, the community's role and who else will be attending the Panel workshop
- > Terms of reference for the Panel
- > Background content for discussion on the day
- > Relevant past submissions, reports etc.

It is envisaged Council will brand this content, and will have the final role of posting the invite and information pack to each Panel member.



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